



Minnesota State University, Mankato
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Honors Capstone Portfolios

Honors Program at Minnesota State University,
Mankato

11-2017

Katelynn Malecha Honors Portfolio

Katelynn Louise Malecha
Minnesota State University, Mankato

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KATELYNN MALECHA

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Welcome to my portfolio!



Hello and welcome! I thoroughly appreciate you taking the time to view my portfolio. I'm a senior at Minnesota State University, Mankato pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Exercise Science with a concentration in Pre-Occupational Therapy and a minor in Psychology. I hope to someday become an occupational therapist.

Feel free to browse around and if you find yourself having any additional questions or comments, [contact me](#) at anytime!

Mission Statement

I, Katelynn Malecha, believe in making a difference in this world, whether that be assisting someone in academics or personally. I also believe in pushing myself for the greater good. Through hard work and determination, anything may be achieved.

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KATELYNN MALECHA

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Minnesota State University, Mankato

School: [Minnesota State University, Mankato](#)

Address: 122 Taylor Center Mankato, MN 56001

Admissions Phone: 507-389-1822

GPA: 3.68

Minnesota State University, Mankato contains over 15,000 students with nearly 1,080 faculty members. The university has many options around campus, like hiking and biking trails.

I am currently involved in Swing Dancing Club, German Club, Honors Beacon Newsletter, Mankato Ski and Snowboard Club, Honors Student Council, and Honors Program.



New Prague High School

School: [New Prague High School](#)

Address: 410 Central Ave. N. New Prague, MN 56071

Phone: 952-758-1700

GPA: 4.1

Located in a small town, the school contained approximately 1,200 students. The school ranked 3rd in science, 8th in math, and 15th in reading of all 341 school districts in Minnesota. With an average of 94% rate of graduation in comparison to the state's average 79%, NPHS graduates more students than the state of Minnesota.

I participated in many school activities such as: High Mileage Car Club President, *Trojan Times* Head Editor, German Club, PROUD (People Respecting Others and Understanding Differences), Project Read-a-Lot, National Honor Society, and a fifth grade student teacher.



The Honors Program

"The mission of the [Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato](#) is to create future leaders, researchers and global citizens by providing high ability and motivated students with exceptional learning opportunities, mentoring relationships, and a community of scholars that foster their development as future leaders in a global society."

The Honors Program focuses on those three competencies: leadership, research, and global citizenship. Within this tab, you can find various opportunities I've had fulfilling each competency.



Leadership

"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to utilize personal leadership values and guide groups toward a common goal."

Research

"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to exhibit information literacy skills, synthesize and integrate ideas, produce original research or creative works, and contribute to knowledge."

Global Citizenship

"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to exhibit second language and communication competencies and exhibit cultural competency and awareness."

Leadership

Leaves grow, leaves fall, and leaves change, but the leaves always root from the same tree. In my leadership, I encounter many "seasons"; such as, when I develop, when I allow someone else to lead, and when I must never lose myself. Having a strong trunk and sense of oneself provides a base to be built upon. From there, the branches will expand to who knows how far. According to the *Strengths Based Leadership*-book, a leader must know their strengths and use them to their full potential. As I look back on my strengths from 2014, I see the five strengths were as relevant then are now. Those five strengths are: achiever, discipline, individualization, input, and learner. My strengths and experiences have led to me create my own leadership philosophy.

Since my freshman year, I have attended [Honors Student Council](#) meetings participating actively. I have changed roles from member to secretary, president, to vice president. I have had to maintain good grades to remain in the Honors Program, balance my time with activities and academics, work on a team, and continue to create change. Being president by far was my most challenging leadership role to date. If it was not for this role, I would not have presented at honors conferences and established many relationships. I met so many people and changed my philosophy. I changed from viewing leadership as someone speaking to the group, to now using my strength as an input person to ask people for their suggestions. I lead the Honors Student Council meetings in a circle, permitting everyone to give their opinions and if people did not feel comfortable sharing out loud, I collected note cards after some meetings. At all honors conference meetings, I had to give updates about the Honors Student Council, something that not only intimidated me, but worried that I was an inadequate president. I forced myself to speak at the council meetings, using my voice to speak about what we were doing and plan to be doing. I realized how important it is to overcome a fear and give input when needed.

I continually try to improve my teamwork skills. In [German Club](#), we each had assigned roles and learned each other's strengths to operate effectively as a team. This is the first time someone called me a servant leader, something I never noticed about myself. I lead groups not for the recognition, rather to create change and serve my community. I ask the group what their goals are and share mine so we all have a vision for change and everyone feels that they have a purpose within the group. This was lacking in my [Leadership through Government](#) experience. The team basically received instructions together, but then split up and I did not feel connected to the group. Although this experience did not quite define my leadership philosophy, my sophomore year of college did. I was the [Honors Learning Community Coordinator](#) and created my [Mentor Philosophy](#) at the same time. As I was learning about mentorship, I was directly applying my learning to the Learning Community Coordinator (LCC) position. In class, we talked about the importance of service to the local community. As the LCC, I organized a service event for my students and took our class discussions of how to include and give meaning to every participant when planning the event. I knew my strengths and could lead effectively from the self-awareness and developing new, fun events for my students.

The leadership role requires one to find oneself, but also discovering what our strengths and weaknesses are because those differences make all the difference in the world. I can identify my own strengths and build upon them. Each skill allows me to think but it's not who I was, but who I will be in the future. Someday an occupational therapist, I will lead my therapy sessions and reflect on what my leadership philosophy is. I want others to actively engage individually and in a team to know what their strengths are and to create lasting change.

The Strengths Based Leadership book quotes, "Perhaps the ultimate test of a leader is not what you are able to do in the here and now – but instead what continues to grow long after you're gone" (Rath 95). How tall will my tree grow? What will be my impact in this world? For now, I can recognize and use my traits and experiences to grow as a person and leader into something much larger than anyone or myself expects.

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Research

"Research is to see what everybody has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought."
Albert Szent- Gyorgyi

The Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato instructed me during freshman year that I had to complete and present one project once throughout my four years there. Little did I know that I would complete multiple projects outside my major of Exercise Science.

My university research experience began in my German courses when we had to write a research paper in 201 and 202. In 201, I selected a German politician to learn more about. I not only learned about the on-campus resources, but how challenging writing in another language is. In addition, I learned very quickly how to determine whether a source was worth my time in reading or not. Then in 202, we looked into comparisons of Germany's and America's cultures. I expanded my learning from 201, to incorporating culture within research. These projects provided me with a basis to be developed much later.

The following year lead me to working and completing an honors contract to conduct primary research at Brown County Historical Society in New Ulm, Minnesota. German 201 and 202 improved my German language skills so I could read the articles. I worked with Jonathan Smith and Dr. Nadja Kramer and it was my first time working in an archive. I grew as an individual researcher keeping track of my notes, and as a peer to know how I work most effectively. This experience helped me realize that it is never too early to ask for help before it gets too late. I am now able to recognize when not enough communication and contact is being made when working with a partner. The final creation of this project is a paper with connections between the German societies that have never been discovered. I was very intimidated working in an archive and presenting in front of peers with mind-blowing research. Reflecting upon that now, everyone has their own interests and types of research that is their favorite.

My favorite research project is Focusing on the Ability, not the disability. I completed this with Sarah Aldrich and conducted creative research through a literature review to find the misconceptions and attitudes towards people with disabilities. We discovered the lack of research done and tools to combat the stigmas; therefore, we wrote a children's book. We have presented at multiple national and regional conferences and have a website with a free downloadable PDF version of the book. We continued our research and wrote a lesson plan so educators everywhere have access to the book and a premade lesson plan. I learned in my previous experiences of how to conduct ethical research and now applied my learning to create new knowledge. As my major is Exercise Science with a concentration in Pre-Occupational Therapy and a minor in Psychology, I plan to share this with children in my future career. This research experience taught me the value of sharing research. So many people love this presentation and offer so many suggestions.

My learning continued to grow when working with the Honors Program Director, Dr. Anne Dahlman. I created a survey with the Honors Student Council Executive Board, distributed it, and analyzed the results. I then presented it at the Forum on Diversity at the National Collegiate Honors Conference and later at the Upper Midwest Regional Honors Program. Dr. Dahlman and I wrote up the research and submitted a manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal, Honors in Practice, which got accepted. She challenged and supported my ideas every step of the way making me realize how essential it is to have mentors in our lives outside of our family. In addition, this project taught me the importance of confidence. I presented in front of many very accomplished professors as a student, but I knew my research and my project.

All of my research was started at the Honors Program with a goal to develop something new- whether that be a research paper, presentation, or a children's book. I attended and presented at multiple conferences which I thoroughly enjoyed sharing and gathering more knowledge with students and professors from all over. I plan to continue researching someday as an occupational therapist to find the ethical and efficient treatment ways for various patients.

Global Citizenship

"It's okay to be uncomfortable." Being uncomfortable challenges me outside my small town Minnesota upbringing. Little did I know from the title that I do not have to immerse myself in a culture outside of the United States. Throughout my years at Minnesota State University, Mankato, I learned and participated in other cultures like German, people who have a disability, deaf, and hospice (dying community).

Initially, I found myself taking German courses at the university and participating in German Club. I talked with German foreign exchange students and my professor from Germany about German culture during German Club Conversation Hour. The people I met broke down many stereotypes of a German and I realized in that moment, that I cannot put Germany, Austria, and Switzerland into one group of people. I knew each area was different and since German is spoken in all those countries, I must not think they are all the same. Using a second language, I could learn some words that are not in the English language, but essential to German culture, for example I will continue to use the German language when travelling, listening to music, and speaking with my friends whose first language is German. The language challenged me as the course work was more than many of major classes. My culture is different than theirs, but it doesn't mean it is drastically similar or different. In one of my papers, I looked at how Germans came to the United States and how Americans and German-Americans chose to represent their ancestors.

As when people think German has "one culture," the culture of disability is very different. There are unwritten rules when people interact with those with disabilities. For one, we should focus on the ability, not the disability in the individual. This culture strives for independence and does not need us to "hold their hands." The nonverbal communications include staring or feeling pity for someone, which is not welcomed. People with disabilities want to be seen outside their disability and as a person first. Coming from a culture who points out people's imperfections and wants to help people with whatever they need is a struggle for me when I realize that these people do not need help, they need service. I'm not helping my student ski, I'm assisting them in skiing. My students have challenged me to find my own abilities and focus on those rather than what I cannot do.

The dying community, or hospice, is the experience that truly made me feel uncomfortable and challenged me mentally. I did not think that I would be strong enough to develop a relationship with an individual that had a terminal illness with six months or less to live. It did not stop me from volunteering though. I immersed myself in a different community with new values. They value emotional, spiritual, medical, and social support. I do not and will not fix patients. This is like disability culture that is it not fixing or helping, rather serving. For hospice, it is to be a listening ear or hand to hold and provide comfort in the last moments. The culture of death is based off culture, but some people within a culture may handle it differently. For example, some family is present, while in others, they are not present. I do not judge the not present families, even though my culture says to be present. Death is sensitive and understanding what someone is going through is impossible.

During my senior year, I finally enrolled in Introduction to American Sign Language. This course is very interesting as I learn more about deaf culture. This is not completed and will be updated in December of 2017. I plan to write a final paper about deaf culture and attend events with people who are deaf. The nonverbal signs here are the verbal signs which makes this experience through language a unique one.

Being a global citizen does not mean that I must speak a different language, rather understand someone else's culture. This will force me to be uncomfortable, but that is typically when I learn the most. When I expand my learning outside my "box," I am able to see the world through different eyeglasses. As a future occupational therapist, I will have patients from different backgrounds, some even different countries, but I will not judge them and provide the best service to them I can.

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If you have any questions, feel free to email me for a resume or further details about the positions.

Math and English Tutor

For two summers, I worked with an eight year old. I taught her multiplication and division over one summer and also worked on writing skills. I created a lesson plan, tests, homework, literally everything. The following year, she was at the top of her class and continues to remain there.

Nanny

For a few families, I fed, played, and watched their children. I gained patience, responsibility, and leadership skills. I absolutely loved babysitting and enjoy hearing the creative words future generations have to say or think.

Customer Service and Delivery Assistant

Working summers and occasional weekends at Tim's Small Engine, I gained many skills like customer service and working independently. Providing honest information and advising which equipment would be the best fit for the customer.

Learning Community Coordinator

I coordinated social and academic events for first-year honors students. I met with each student individually twice per semester and developed strong relations with learning community students, faculty and staff.

Adaptive Ski Instructor and Volunteer of the Year



Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute
Start Date: January 10, 2010
One of the most rewarding parts of my whole is volunteering for the Courage Center Ski and Snowboard Program. I started working as a stand-up instructor my freshman year of high school then making the move to bi-ski. The bi-ski is much more physically straining and requires stronger skiing.

Regardless of who I work with, Courage Center has always thanked me for volunteering, but in reality I receive so much happiness for volunteering that I should be thanking them. It's the reason why I am so optimistic today, that I can be grateful in everything in my life.

In 2015, I was awarded the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute Volunteer of the Year. This is a huge honor and one of my proudest awards I have received. Being a volunteer is my passion and to have something given back was truly rewarding. Through receiving this award, I will continue to volunteer and always recall of the good memories I have, and find ways to continue to grow as not only a volunteer, but also as a person.

Autumn Grace Bingo

For the Honors Program's Service Week 2015, one of the activities was to go to a local nursing home and assist residents to play Bingo. I enjoyed chatting with the older members of the Mankato community. I learned a lot about not only the residents and their own lives, but how much change that has really occurred in the area. It meant a lot to help the people who needed more assistance, but to make a difference in someone's life. I will never forgot how much the one lady appreciated my hug and was so grateful to receive one. It made me release that sometimes taking a couple hours or even a few moments to either talk or express certain gestures can really help someone's else throughout the day.

Waitress

Lonsdale Sky WarnEvery year, the Lonsdale Sky Warn fund raises at Pioneer Power and are always in need of waitresses. I must work diligently and efficiently all while maintaining good composure to keep the customers coming back. I enjoy helping people who help my community out in times of distress.

Hat Making

During sophomore and junior years, the Honors Student Council made no sew fleece hats for Mankato organizations. My sophomore year, we donated them to CADA (Committees Against Domestic Abuse). The following year we donated over 50 hats to the REACH and Theresa House Shelter (Partners for Affordable Housing). This was fun to gather many students to create hats and socialize.

Clothing Drive

For two years, the Honors Student Council has collected and donated clothes for various organizations whether it be on or off campus. I was responsible for advertising and dropping off the clothing.

ECHO Food Shelf Drive

For my learning community, we all volunteered to better something in the Mankato area. We drove to North Mankato where we placed paper bags on doorsteps for home owners to fill the bags. We then went back and collected the bags with food. From this, we received 996 pounds of food to assist families in need. This not only helped build our learning community friendships, but also helped people in need of food in our local Mankato area. It was nice to give back to the community where I attend college. I have organized this once and participated twice.

Campaign Office

I volunteered for a campaign office for Honors US Government. I learned a lot about leadership and myself. Leadership Within Government is reflected upon in my leadership tab under the Honors Program.

Worry Doll Making

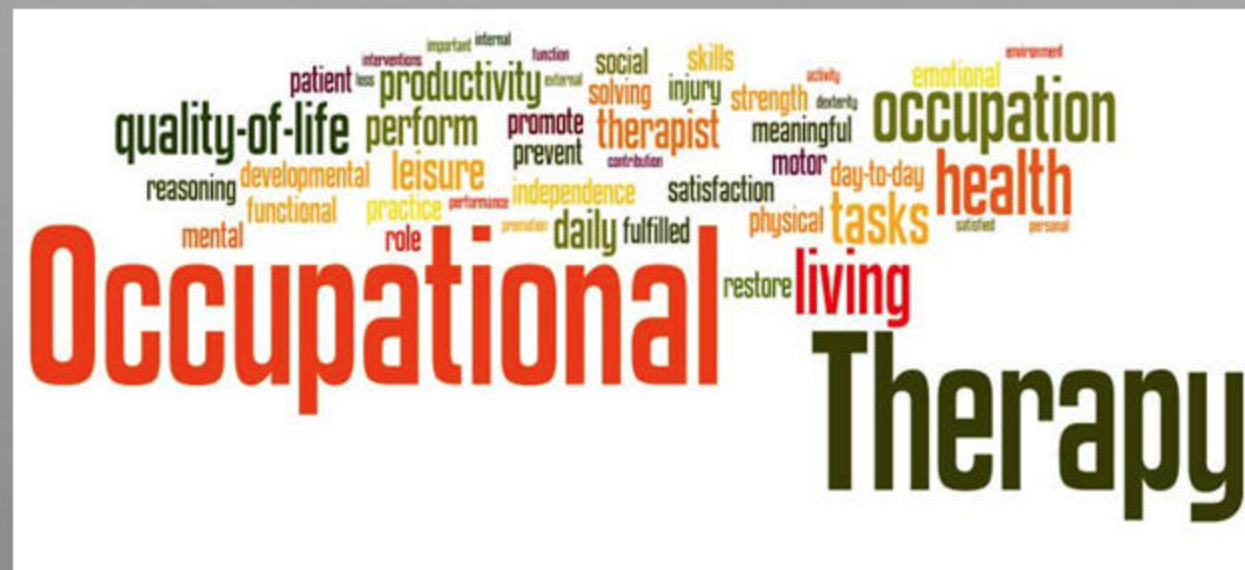
In the spring of 2017, the Honors Student Council made worry dolls and notes for children who are new to foster care. These dolls have been known to provide comfort.

Rake the Town

In November of 2016, the Honors Student Council raked multiple lawns in the Mankato and North Mankato community. This was an excellent way to help people who are living at home that are unable to rake their own lawns at no charge. We initially raked our one large lawn as a group then split into two groups for smaller yards.

Valentine Card Crafting

In February of 2017, during one of the Honors Student Council meetings, we created some valentines. This were later dropped off at Laurel's Edge Assisted Living. This facility was under lock down- meaning no family, volunteers, or anyone besides employees and residents were permitted inside the building due to a flu outbreak. This provided comfort to residents in a time of no visitors.



Personal Statement

Swoosh! Giggles, snow sliding, and screams of happiness echo throughout the ski hill. Teaching adaptive downhill skiing molded my passion of helping those with disabilities. By overcoming my own personal adversities of being born with club foot, I want to help others overcome their own difficulties. Occupational therapists help patients with their challenges to create a higher quality of life. Through my personal challenges and experiences, an occupational graduate school program will allow me to continue to grow into a professional that interests me.

My own personal challenges include being born with club foot and now having 4.5 shoe size differences between my feet. I have learned how to adapt to my environment and want to help others adapt to theirs. Performing the activities of daily living are core to the occupational therapist's work, and skills are taught to people who must make alterations in how they carry on those tasks. Occupational therapists challenge themselves and others to live life to the fullest, something I strive to do every day. I began dancing at three years old for therapeutic reasons, but with time it turned into a passion. My doctors were fascinated at the mobility and flexibility of my feet. I understand the aches of moving and exercising partially because of my club foot, and I want to help others challenge themselves to reach their goals.

Selecting a major and making the adjustment to college was another one of my challenges. I am a first-generation college student coming from a small town moving to a significantly larger city. I knew I needed more education and to be exposed to multiple cultures. A few semesters were difficult for me as I was trying to find my place on campus and a future life and career. Initially I wanted to be a mathematician to teach on a college campus. I thought math was fun and wanted to share that with others. When I was writing my own algorithm and speaking to my research mentor, he asked why I wanted to be a math professor. I said that I enjoyed math and wanted to help others overcome the challenges math entails. Fast forward two months while volunteering for Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute Ski and Snowboard Program (CKRISS) and talking to other occupational therapists (who are volunteers), I realized they assisted others with their challenges. CKRISS provides a fun, safe, and education atmosphere- one that permits me to grow personally to professionally.

CKRISS awarded me Volunteer of the Year in 2015. This is one of my proudest accomplishments and the "aha moment" that confirmed that occupational therapy is the career for me. I challenged myself to remain involved with CKRISS and demonstrated true commitment to the ski program. This is awarded to someone who follows the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute Vision that "We are guided by our vision that one day all people will live, work, learn and play in a community based on abilities, not disabilities." Many skiers with varying abilities have captured my heart; therefore, it is one of the many reasons of why I want to become an occupational therapist. One day my student was in such pain that we ended the ski day early to go inside and stretch. My student explained what helped alleviate their pain and spasms and instructed me through some exercises. I learned the benefits of exercises through my student and felt incredible of how I could do something. Many skiing days do not go as intended, as therapy session do, yet we were able to find something to still make the time pass. This volunteer experience and award provided me with the confidence to know that I have the ability and patience to work with patients varying in abilities. That day among many other similar experiences help me decide to pursue occupational therapy.

Another example of my commitment to stretching my abilities is by participating in the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I have been challenged to be a leader, researcher, and global citizen. I reflect on these experiences in my personal website at <http://katelynnmalecha.weebly.com/>. Through leadership, I have found my leadership style and how I work within a group setting. Occupational therapists must know how they are leaders during their therapy sessions and with coworkers, but also how to be followers and know when to ask others for guidance. Through analytic research, I disseminated my results through thirty-minute talks at national conferences, posters, workshops, and published in the journal of Honors in Practice as a first author. I'm excited to share knowledge and talk about research that I hope to continue researching in graduate school and beyond as a professional in the best practice as possible. My team and I developed something new. Through global citizenship, I have challenged myself in German courses; although, global citizenship can even be to our local community and the subcultures within like the disability community. A peer and I researched the misconceptions and attitudes toward people with disabilities. To combat the stigmas, we wrote a children's book and presented our research at multiple regional and national conferences. In the future, I would love to implement this into not only schools, but pediatric occupational therapy clinics so children can connect closer with a book that resembles themselves. Occupational therapists must be leaders in their therapy sessions, researchers to find many treatment options, and global citizens who appreciate different cultures and disabilities.

In spring 2017, I was nominated for and received the Outstanding Collegian Student Leadership Awards campus wide at Minnesota State University, Mankato. This award is "presented to a student who is a leader of a Recognized Student Organization (RSO) and who represents the core values of MSU, Mankato, by exemplifying excellence in their organization and works toward the benefit of others." The core values include integrity, diversity, access, responsibility and excellence. I am very proud and humbled by this accomplishment and plan to include these values currently as a student to someday an occupational therapist. Occupational therapists provide many services to various individuals, some of which may hold different belief systems and values. In one of my courses titled, *Exploring Personal Leadership through Social Change*, we discussed privilege and multiple communities outside of our own. We had speakers from various subcultures and open discussions in a nonjudgmental zone who instructed me how to work with other groups. It is, therefore, my duty to provide them with the same access that my other patients will have and strive to be the best therapist for them. I must be ethical and willing to learn new techniques with the patient's best interest in mind.

Observing multiple occupational therapy facilities has made me very excited to take the next steps into becoming an occupational therapist. Occupational therapists help remove barriers for people to open up the world to people live life fully. My own adversities of being born with club foot, being a first-generation college student, and finding my place have all challenged me to find alternative ways to complete activities of daily living and now is the time to assist others in finding theirs. The more I learn about occupational therapy and reflect upon my experiences - whether that be volunteering or observing, the more I see that occupational therapy is the correct career. Earning the titles and recognition of Volunteer of the Year and Outstanding Collegian makes me proud of what I have done to earn these awards. I am proud because of overcoming my own challenges and want others to feel that some sense of accomplishment, whether that be learning a new skill or discovering their own abilities.

Observation Hours

Please note these are brief descriptions and if you should inquire more about my experiences, feel free to [contact me](#)!

Mayo Health Systems - Hospital

This was the first facility that I observed in the summer of 2016. This is a transitional care unit with some patients that are long-term in a small town. There were only three occupational therapists between this hospital and the pediatric facility in the same town.

Mayo Health Systems - Pediatric Therapy

After being in the hospital for part of the day, I followed the same therapist to their other site of work: the pediatric out-patient clinic.

Ecumen Pathstone Living - Aegis Therapy

In the summer of 2017, I spent over 60 hours observing mostly occupational therapy along with the occasional physical therapy. This is a geriatric facility with both short and long term in-patient, out-patient, and even home care. I was fortunate to observe all of these with my favorite being home care.

Tri-City United Schools

The summer of 2017, I observed one day at this school. I observed elementary and a couple middle-schoolers.

Pediatric Therapy Services, Inc.

In the summer of 2017, I observed two days here and then was asked to apply for the Fall Volunteer Intern in the Occupational Therapy Department. I was interviewed and then was offered the position. I am very excited to learn a lot here! This is one of the largest pediatric facilities in the area.

Venture Academy

I observed at this intercity charter school one day. Unlike my small town school that I attended, many children here receive occupational therapy services. We talked a lot about zones of regulation, sensory activities, and how to manage their disorders.

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Outdoor Hobbies

Being outdoors in nature is one of my favorite places to be. Whether that be mountain biking, hiking, backpacking, snowshoeing, golfing, or simply reading a book outdoors, I thoroughly enjoy being connected with nature.

Skiing

Skiing is my favorite activity outside of classes and work. I enjoy being outside and feeling the fresh, crisp winter air. I used to race and now teach adaptive skiing. It is a good way to enjoy winter and a reason to go outside.

Traveling

I love traveling around the world and exploring other cultures. It fascinates me to see how other people live their lives and to also just see and experience something new! Feel free to ask me about my adventures.

Awards

Outstanding Collegian - 2017

This award is "presented to a student who is a leader of a Recognized Student Organization (RSO) and who represents the core values of MSU, Mankato, by exemplifying excellence in their organization and works toward the benefit of others."

The values include, "integrity and respect in the way we conduct ourselves, diversity in who we are and what we do, access to our programs and services that create opportunities for all to pursue their dreams, responsibility to those we serve by providing an education that inspires solutions to society's challenges, excellence in our academic and non-academic pursuits."

Being nominated and receiving this award is a huge honor and one of my proudest accomplishments.

Adaptive Ski Volunteer of the Year - 2015

In 2015, I was awarded the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute Volunteer of the Year. This is a huge honor. Being a volunteer is my passion and to have something given back was truly rewarding. Through receiving this award, I will continue to volunteer and always recall of the good memories I have, and find ways to continue to grow as not only a volunteer, but also as a person.

Dean's List

Awarded to students with a grade point average (GPA) over 3.5. I received this in Fall 2014, Fall 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2016, and Spring 2017.

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